

Report

Minute Man National Historical Park

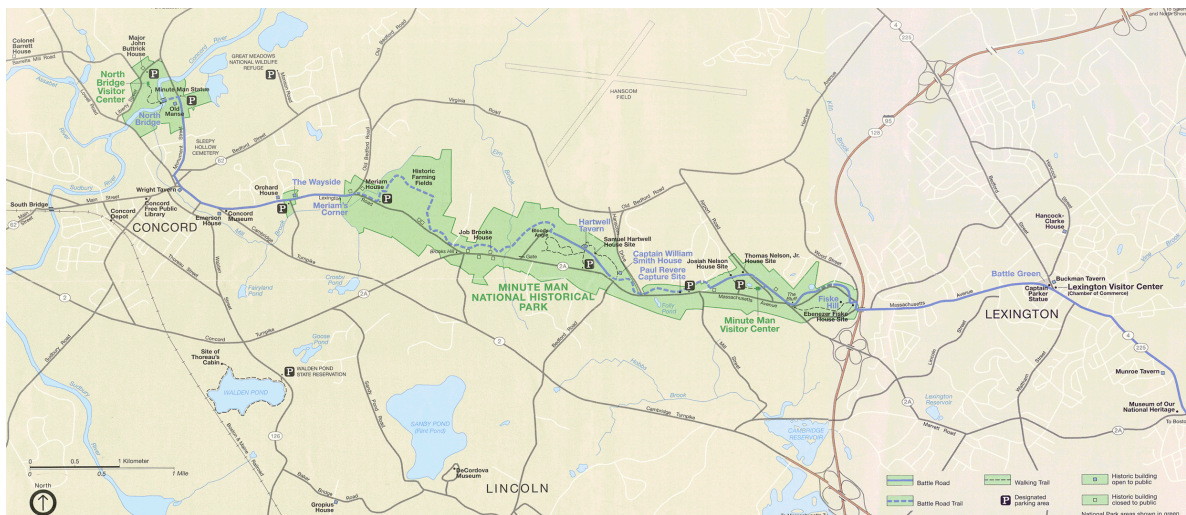
■ 1.0 Site Description

The Minute Man National Historical Park (NHP) is the location of the fighting that took place on April 19, 1775, which marked the beginning of the American Revolution. The Minute Man NHP is located in three towns in Massachusetts:

- Concord;
- Lincoln; and
- Lexington.

The site is 12 miles west of Boston. Most of the Park lies along Route 2A. Figure 1 shows the location of the Park in the three-town region.

Figure 1. Map



The Minute Man NHP is a unit of the NPS and was created in 1959. Minute Man NHP consists of over 900 acres of land, including original segments of the Battle Road of April 19, 1775. The Park includes:

- **North Bridge** (includes the North Bridge Visitor Center in Concord, British Grave Site, 1836 Battle Monument, and the Minute Man statue by Daniel Chester French). Figure 2 shows a picture of the area adjacent to the North Bridge;

- Several **Colonial** houses;
- **Battle Road Unit** (5.5 miles of Battle Road) between Lexington and Concord; and
- **The Wayside**, home of authors Louisa May Alcott, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Margaret Sidney. The Wayside was incorporated into the Minute Man NHP in 1965, and was the first literary site to become part of the NPS system.

Figure 2. North Bridge, Concord.



The Battle Road Unit includes:

- **Minute Man Visitor Center** – A newly renovated center contains a multimedia show, “Road to Revolution,” exhibits, a battle mural, and a bookstore. It is located in Lexington.
- **Battle Road Trail** – A 5.5-mile, multi-use trail runs from Meriam’s Corner in Concord to Fiske Hill in Lexington. The trail passes by historic farming fields, historic homes, and stone walls. It is open to bikes, pedestrians, strollers, and wheel chairs. Boardwalks exist to protect wetland areas. Parts of the trail are restored segments of the Battle Road from April 19, 1775.

- **Hartwell Tavern** – Built in 1733, the Hartwell Tavern is located on Battle Road. Costumed interpreters model colonial living and tell about the lives of the revolutionaries.

Goals

The goals of the Minute Man NHP are to:

- Preserve and protect the significant historic sites, structures, properties and landscapes associated with the opening battles of the American Revolution;
- Interpret the colonial struggle for natural rights and freedoms; and
- Preserve and interpret the 19th century literary revolution through The Wayside, home of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Louisa May Alcott, and Margaret Sidney.

Visitation Levels and Visitor Profile

The Minute Man NHP is the sixth largest visitor destination in Massachusetts with approximately 1 million visitors per year. Visitation was somewhat lower in 1999 due to the extreme heat that occurred in July. Visitation is highest in the fall foliage season of September and October and the summer months of July and August. Visitation is lowest in January and February. The difference in weekend and weekday visitation is minimal.

It is likely that visitation will increase over time as additional visitor facilities and programs are introduced. The Park's previous efforts were impeded by private ownership of Park land. Now there are greater opportunities to develop and promote the location as term reservations and life estates now are complete.

The NPS site is open year round with the exception of The Wayside, which is open only from May through October. Guided tours of The Wayside are limited to 10 people to limit the impact on the site. There are no other sites that limit the number of visitors. However, the capacity of the parking lots may limit visitation on some days, especially at the Minute Man Visitor Center. Figure 3 shows a picture of the Minute Man Visitor Center parking lot. The sites in the Park generally are not within a short walking distance of one other; therefore, if one lot is full, it is unlikely that visitors would park in another and walk to the first.

A typical visit includes the North Bridge and the North Bridge Visitor Center. The visitor will often visit another location within the Park as well. The Park now is trying to capture visitors coming by car from Route 128 so they will begin their visit at the new interpretative center at the Minute Man Visitor Center. The visit would then continue westward, include historic buildings, memorials, and trails, and end at the North Bridge.

Visitation is highly connected with Walden Pond, the Lexington Green, and other historic tourist locations in the area.

Figure 3. Visitor Center Parking Lot.



Recreational Opportunities

Recreational opportunities at the Minute Man NHP include:

- Walking and hiking;
- Biking;
- Winter sports (e.g., cross-country skiing, snow shoeing); and
- Touring the historic structures.

Existing Transportation Conditions

A brief description of the current transportation conditions is found below:

- **Monument Street** – Access to the North Bridge is possible via Liberty Street or Monument Street. This road has a narrow bridge with weight restrictions and negligible shoulders. Figure 4 shows a picture of the road and bridge. Many bikers and pedestrians use the road in spite of the fact there is no shoulder or safe path.

Although relatively few accidents have occurred here, the condition is inherently hazardous.

Figure 4. Monument Street, Concord.



- **Route 2A and Battle Road** – In many cases Route 2A overlays the historic Battle Road. When Route 2A was straightened, some segments of the original Battle Road were marginalized and abandoned. These segments were made available to the Park and restored. Route 2A is a state-owned road and is heavily used by motorists. All parts of the Battle Road that are under Park ownership prohibit motorized vehicles.

The Massachusetts Port Authority has considered expanding airport operations, as well as ground development in the immediate area of the Park along Route 2A and issued an environmental impact statement (EIS) in 1996 with several development scenarios. The NPS responded with great concern for the future of the National Park if the character of the Battle Road along Route 2A changes significantly.

In addition, the recent introduction of commercial airline passenger service at Hanscom represents a radical change of direction for that airport which is of great concern to the Park because of the impacts it will have on ground traffic in the Park, its environs, and Route 2A.

- **Town congestion** – Some residents of Concord state that the NPS is responsible for the congestion in the town center (i.e., Concord Green). The configuration of the town and the roads make it difficult to access the North Bridge and Visitor Center without going through the complex traffic circle in Concord where Main Street, Monument Street, and Bedford Street come together.
- **Tour and school buses** – There are more than 6,000 tour and school buses that visit the Minute Man NHP site per year. A significant problem exists with managing the conflicting bus and bicycle traffic in the towns leading to the Minute Man Park, especially on fall weekends.
- **Signage** – Informational and directional signs to the Park are limited considering the numerous historic, tourist locations in the area.
- **Parking** – Parking facilities are not always sufficient, especially on peak visitation days. Visitors may need to park illegally or will be unable to visit certain locations in the Park.
- **Public transit** – Access to public transit is limited. Commuter rail serves Concord and Lincoln on the Fitchburg commuter line. The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's (MBTA) bus route 76 serves Hanscom Air Force Base and stops about a quarter- to a half-mile from the Minute Man Visitor Center. However, bus service is limited on Saturdays and there is no service on Sundays. Concord has no bus service.
- **Battle Road Trail** – Cars are not allowed on the 5.5-mile Battle Road Trail. The trail, which is still under construction, is a recent addition funded by ISTEA money.
- **Biking and pedestrian access** – There are some shoulders available for bikers and walkers. There are also some pedestrian paths that can be used for biking, although they are not well maintained and therefore can be difficult for bikers to use (e.g., tree roots causing ground upheaval). Biking is not allowed off-trail. There are three bike trails located nearby – Minuteman Bike Path, the Bedford Bikeway, and the Bay Circuit Trail. Connections and improved signage to access these bike trails are needed. The NPS site gets significant use by pedestrians, as well.
- **Water transportation** – The Concord River runs through the site under the North Bridge. It is designated as a national scenic river. According to the Park staff, there can be as many as two dozen canoes stopping on the banks of the NPS site each day. The banks are being adversely impacted; proper facilities are required both to protect the natural and historic resources and to promote opportunities for water transport. Funds are being sought to reconstruct a historic boathouse on the north end.
- **Equestrians** – Horses are not permitted in the Park.
- **Winter usage** – Cross-country skiing and snow shoeing is allowed in the winter. Usage is limited to the paths but enforcement is difficult. Snowmobiles are not permitted in the Park.

Public and Agency Coordination

The Minute Man NHS coordinates with:

- Conservation lands and other local partners with agricultural programs;
- Neighboring tourist sites to coordinate events and test special programs (e.g., test using multi-site admission tickets with Old Manse and Orchard House);
- Hanscom Area Town Selectmen, initially to address Hanscom Air Field issues but now addressing regional town planning issues;
- U.S. Air Force;
- Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport);
- Massachusetts Highway Department; and
- Interagency task force which includes the Massachusetts Highway Department and the NPS.

■ **2.0 Existing ATS**

Currently, the only alternative transportation systems (ATS) in place at the Minute Man NHP are:

- Limited access by commuter rail;
- Access and touring of the Park by school and tour buses;
- Access and touring of the Park by bicycle and pedestrian traffic; and
- Limited access by water along the Concord River at the western edge of the site.

■ **3.0 ATS Needs**

Several additional ATS options identified for the site include:

- **Off-site park-and-ride and shuttle to site** – The Park and Massport have discussed the possibility of developing a park-and-ride facility on Hanscom Air Force Base from which a shuttle service could transport visitors to local tourist destinations. The park-and-ride facility could include a visitor reception area, lunch facilities, and some information to orient visitors. The shuttle could consist of a van service running on a fixed route schedule and provide access to the Minute Man NHP, Concord, Lexington, and neighboring towns.

- **Theme tours** – A pilot project was conducted in the spring and summer of 1999 by Boston Duck Tour, Boston Trolley, and the Longfellow Park. The tour was based on a literary theme and traveled to sites in the region with literary associations. This pilot was successful and could be continued. The partnership was developed by the duck tour operators but using a trolley fleet instead of the duck boat fleet. Operation began in March of 1999 using private seed money and some grants. The operator considered a variety of themes (e.g., maritime, black history, and women) which could be tested as well. The tours could link a variety of sites in the region.
- **Park bus** – The NPS has given some thought to purchasing a bus for use by the site, but the large capital costs have deterred them. A small transit bus or minivan could be used to provide scheduled guided tours of the site during peak visitation seasons and provide specially guided tours on request by groups during the off-season. The tours could be interpretative and educational in nature. Peak-season tours could be scheduled four times a day; frequency could increase as visitor demand for the service increases over time.
- **Public transportation** – Access to the NHP by public transportation could be improved. Such measures could include increasing the frequency of bus service to Lexington, especially on weekends; increasing commuter rail service to Concord especially on weekends; and providing a mini-shuttle service during peak seasons from the commuter rail station to the Park to cover the remaining 1.5 miles.
- **Bike and pedestrian trails** – Connections from the Park to the three nearby bike trails (i.e., Minuteman Bike Path, the Bedford Bikeway, and the Bay Circuit Trail) and creation of paths and lanes on the site could improve access to the Park and increase safety both by foot and by bike. In addition, a connection between the North Bridge and the North Bridge Visitor Center along Monument Street could improve an inherently dangerous situation for bikers and pedestrians posed by the narrow road and speeding automobiles.
- **Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technology** – A monitor at each of the visitor centers with real-time information on visitor attractions; special programs; and transportation information, including directions, scheduling, parking conditions, bus and transit stops, schedules, and fares would help to improve the visitor experience and reduce traffic problems in the area. Information could also be provided via telephone and voicemail systems.
- **Signage** – The Minute Man NHP would benefit from improved signage to the Park and to various locations within the Park. This would reduce the amount of unnecessary travel by lost drivers and improve the visitor experience.
- **Bus parking** – Due to the large number of buses accessing the Park, consideration could be given on providing additional parking for bus services. This will help reduce unnecessary travel by buses after they have dropped off their passengers and reduce congestion in the town and in the Park while the buses are waiting for passengers to return.

■ 4.0 Basis of ATS Needs

As the site continues to fully develop visitor facilities and programs, it is likely that visitation will increase. The Park wishes to facilitate and better manage the visits, increase use of the Park's historical resources, provide additional education to enhance the visitor experience, and improve the various means of accessing the site. These goals can be addressed in part through alternative transportation systems.

Managing the flow of visitation and increasing the usage of the Park's historical resources can be best addressed through the introduction of transportation and tourist shuttles providing access to or through the NHP site. Improved signage, intelligent transportation systems (ITS) technology, and multimodal facilities will also improve the flow and movement of visitors and increase usage of the Park's varied resources.

Additional education to visitors can be accomplished in conjunction with the transportation and tourist shuttles. An orientation center located at one end of a shuttle service could be one measure. A tourist shuttle that provides educational information on the site would be a second.

■ 5.0 Bibliography

Minute Man NHP web site, <http://www.nps.gov/mima>.

Minute Man NHP, Recreation web site, <http://www.recreation.gov/detail.cfm?ID=778>.

The Wayside web site, <http://www.nps.gov/mima/wayside/Planfrm1.htm>.

■ 6.0 Persons Interviewed

Nancy Nelson, NPS superintendent, on September 27, 1999